TL5758

XANANA
by
WILSON

Cipinang Prison
October / November 1997

These are some of several short essays written by a PRD political prisoner, Wilson, about Xanana Gusmao. Incarcerated in Cipinang prison with Xanana, Wilson had a chance to converse, eat and play basketball and soccer with him. Wilson heads up the PRD-affiliated organization dealing with East Timor, SPRIM. They were written back in October and November 1997, but we just received them last week.
They have been translated from Bahasa Indonesia.
Wilson would like these essays to be freely distributed. Feel free to post or publish them without asking for prior permission.
-- Charlie Scheiner, ETAN, etan-us@igc.apc.org

XANANA GUSMÃO AND ANTI-INTEGRATION COFFEE

One of the most popular agricultural commodities from East Timor is coffee. Since the Portuguese era, coffee has been the people's traditional crop. It has had a high market value. Now, the trading of coffee is monopolized by Robby Sumampouw. He determines the price and the production according to the need of his monopolistic corporations. Sumampouw is an Indonesian businessman close to Gen. (Ret.) Benny Moerdani.

In Cipinang prison, we can enjoy a small amount of East Timorese coffee every Wednesday and Sunday during the visiting hours. Xanana Gusmao prepares brewed coffee for his close friends and family members who visit him on those days. The coffee is prepared in a thermos with red and blue plastic cups by a fellow prisoner who works for him. We also receive supplies of East Timorese coffee from Xanana every now and then. It's not much but the amount is not important. It's the value of comradeship among us which we respect.

I have a theory about East Timorese coffee. If one who drinks it supports integration, he will sense a very bitter taste. If, on the contrary, he/she opposes integration, he/she will enjoy the coffee and even become addicted to it. This is why I call coffee from Xanana as `anti-integration coffee'. Once I was with guests from various Indonesian NGOs who had never taken a clear position regarding East Timor. As a joke, I asked them to drink `anti-integration coffee'. After just the first sip, they gagged. It was understandable because East Timorese coffee has such a strong aroma and taste. When I asked them how it tasted, they said that it was bitter. I laughed. Then, I asked PRD friends the same thing, and they said the coffee was delicious. So I told our NGO friends, "before enjoying East Timorese coffee from Xanana, you have to realize that your thought determines the taste of the coffee. This coffee will taste good only if your mind is clean from the government propaganda about integration of East Timor. If your mind is not clean and you are still doubtful, it will taste bitter to you." These NGO friends were just laughing at what I said. Later, these friends came to visit us again and said, "Well, now we can enjoy the taste of East Timor coffee." It's Xanana's turn to laugh this time, "So, you've changed your mind, eh!"

Because of the limited supply of East Timor coffee, we can not enjoy it every visiting day. Lucky are those who get the chance to savor the taste of `anti-integration coffee'. Yet, there is another item also present at Xanana's table during these particular days: thick white bread, often eaten with margarine. Unlike the `anti-integration coffee', this `referendum bread' is of unlimited supply. Usually Joao (one of the East Timorese prisoners) will distribute this bread from one table to another where the guests of political prisoners gather every Wednesday and Sunday. From my table, I'll shout at Xanana, "Bung Xanana, everybody here supports a referendum for East Timor!" Xanana looks around the room and sees that everyone is holding a piece of white bread. I have already eaten three pieces myself. Xanana then says, "If the Indonesian government finds out, they'll get angry." My mother who just swallowed a piece of the bread asks what a referendum for East Timor means. Joao, sitting next to her, explains in his soft voice, "referendum means that the people will vote whether they want to join Indonesia or stand as a nation by themselves." My mother nods her head slowly, "Yes, I'll support a referendum too. Thanks for the bread."

A luta continua!
Cipinang Prison, October 22, 1997
WILSON
Coordinator of SPRIM (Indonesian Solidarity for the Struggle of the Maubere People)

XANANA GUSMÃO MEETS WITH HAJI PRINCEN

"Princen is always committed to principles of justice, people's rights and human rights. He takes a resolute and brave position." (Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao)

Undoubtedly one of the democrats who consistently speaks about human rights abuses in East Timor is HJC Princen, the Director of LPHAM (Institute for the Defense of Human Rights). Commonly known as Haji Princen, or Poncke, he visits us, the political prisoners in Cipinang, at least once a month. Even though he is in a wheelchair because of a stroke several years ago, Poncke's militancy in visiting the prisoners never ceases. "I know how it feels to be incarcerated. I was a prisoner during the Old Order and during the New Order." After shaking hands with all the political prisoners and detainees, Poncke sits with me to talk about his political activities.

My close relationship with Poncke began in 1995 when PPBI (Center for Indonesian Workers' Struggle) used part of his office as a secretariat. For us Poncke was not only a teacher, but also a grandpa whose spirit remains fresh in all eras. Our friendship grew with daily meetings and continued even after we moved into another office at Kebon Baru, Tebet, Southeast Jakarta. What we have admired most in him is his consistency in opposing any power that violates human rights and suppresses democracy. For the sakes of his ideals, he has had to live just above the subsistence level, and has been vilified by his own countrymen in the Netherlands.

Usually, not long after Poncke arrives, Xanana comes out to the visiting hall from his cell. He takes the opportunity to speak with Poncke. His greeting always starts with, "How is your health, Mr. Princen?" while patting him on the back of the shoulder. These two figures began their friendship when Poncke helped take care of the East Timorese activists who jumped over embassy fences in 1994. Xanana also wrote an essay in a book published to commemorate Princen's 70th birthday in 1995. The meeting of these two figures reflects a classic historical conjuncture. Xanana is a fighter who challenges colonialism in East Timor. Poncke is a Dutchman who challenged the Dutch colonial regime in Indonesia. In a way, my own position is similar to Poncke's. I challenge the Indonesian occupation of East Timor in my own country, while Poncke resisted by joining the republican guerrilla forces during the Revolutionary time of the 1940s. Poncke was much more revolutionary. He joined an armed struggle against the Dutch army, his own people. I only launched a political campaign through PRD and SPRIM.

In his biography written by Joyce van Fenema, Poncke has commented on East Timor, "I said I don't understand how come Indonesian people who had fought so hard to obtain the rights for self-determination can deny the same rights to other people." (Freedom to Choose, p. 223) Therefore, he told Xanana, "The Indonesian government cannot go any further with its East Timor diplomacy. The world community can not be deceived anymore by Alatas and Lopez da Cruz." Xanana added, "The international dialogue forum is useless, the people appointed have to speak in the interest of Jakarta."
Xanana then asked Princen about the condition of the struggle for human rights in Indonesia. He said, "Many people want changes, but nobody dares to go forward. Everybody wants to do it from the safe side. The young people lost their spirit after the PRD activists were imprisoned. I have to keep encouraging them." Of course, Poncke's evaluation is quite subjective, but it has a grain of truth in it. Compared to the struggle of the Maubere people, the struggle for democracy in Indonesia looks pathetic and paltry. It is easily cowered when the storm of repression blows. It is different with the movement Xanana leads: it can sustain itself for decades under very difficult situations. Xanana, however, replies, "Oh, that's normal. We also experienced hard times in the early 1980s."

The conversation with Poncke is always interrupted by the greetings of the guests who come and go, whether they be friends or family of the political prisoners. This time he asked Xanana about Nelson Mandela's demand for his release in order to smoothen the negotiations on the East Timor problem.

"My release is not so important. The improvement for resolving the East Timor problem is the most important thing," Xanana replied briefly, "Don't think that the Indonesian government will release me." This sentence seems to deny the rumor that Xanana will be released within the next two or three months. Indeed, State Secretary Moerdiono has already said that Xanana will not be released until the year 2000. Meanwhile, the Attorney General said that, "Xanana is a criminal prisoner. He was arrested because of his activities which disturbed public order not because of his political struggle." Xanana seems to understand the psychology of the Jakarta government, "it becomes more reactionary under pressure."

A group of young East Timorese came to shake hands with Poncke. He was beginning to look exhausted. The tin roof of the visiting hall made the room extremely hot. Poncke's fair skin became reddish and sweat dripped all over his face. He wiped the sweat with a crumpled tissue, drank a glass of mineral water prepared by the prisoners, and ate a piece of agar-agar given by Buyung's wife. "This agar-agar is very delicious. Tell your mother to make something like this!" Whenever he shook hands with the young East Timorese, he would say in his soft voice, "brothers, keep on fighting!" and the youth would smile back at him. He told Xanana, "Now there are more people who understand your struggle. You will never be alone." Poncke's statement is right. Compared to three years ago, now there are more intellectuals, students, NGOs, mass organizations and political parties who have a more critical position in discussions of the East Timor problem. Their numbers are increasing day by day. This development shows that the Indonesian government approach to East Timor has to be discussed and questioned further. "Yes, that's true. I notice that Indonesian people know more about what is going on in East Timor," Xanana confirmed Poncke's statement.

It's almost noon. Poncke appeared surprised, "I have to go home. I have to see Xena." This is a series shown on television every Sunday afternoon. Poncke looked exhausted after being in such a hot room. He shook my hand, Xanana's and all the political prisoners' in Cipinang. One of his aides pushed his wheelchair toward the security gate. I saw him off up to the gate. We shook hands again. He whispered to my ear, "Brother Wilson, don't ever give up."

A luta continua!

LP Cipinang, October 21, 1997

WILSON

Coordinator of SPRIM (Indonesian Solidarity for the Struggle of the Maubere People)

XANANA MEETS JOURNALISTS FROM PARON AND GATRA

In this month of October, ABRI announced that it arrested several East Timorese young fighters in Semarang and Dili who carried bullets, pictures, videos, letters, and self-assembled bombs from Xanana Gusmao. Gleeful, acting as if it had just got a new toy, ABRI immediately declared that Xanana and his movement was planning to conduct terrorist acts, such as bombing buildings in Dili to sabotage the appointment of Abilio Soares as the governor of East Timor. Furthermore, it said that Xanana and his movement had finally resorted to terrorist methods because their struggle had been stymied. The mass media in Indonesia broadcast the case indifferently, except two national publications owned by Bob Hasan, the King of Forest Destruction. These two publications, Paron and Gatra, released special editions about the arrests, put Xanana's picture on their covers and used provocative, bombastic headlines. Gatra is the weekly magazine established on top of the banned Tempo magazine. The major shareholder is Bob Hasan, Soeharto's closest business ally, a man greatly responsible for the fire burning down the forests of Sumatra and Kalimantan. Paron is a tabloid also owned by Bob Hasan. These two publications can be considered as mouthpieces of the New Order regime. They always attack the voice of the opposition.

Xanana and the Indonesian press have a paradoxical relationship. Xanana is fully aware that the Indonesian press is controlled by the military. In dealing with the East Timor case, the Indonesian press acts like a dumb donkey. Yet, no matter how biased the news about East Timor, no matter how cowed down by repression, for Xanana the press still serves as an important outlet of information for his movement. Compared to ten years ago, there has been a slight reform in the press coverage of the East Timorese issue. The critical attitude of several young journalists has constantly collided with the press owners' policy of security and safety. One prominent journalist, Seno Gumira Adjidarma of Jakarta-Jakarta magazine, was temporarily transferred from his position because of his blunt coverage of the November 12, 1991 Incident. Several other magazines, like Forum Keadilan, D&R, and also Kompas daily, take a neutral position in their coverage, or at times expose a side of East Timor that implicitly reveals the existence of serious problems in the area. Nonetheless, publications like Gatra and Paron have been very reactionary and provocative when it comes to the East Timor issue. Among the activists and journalists, these publications are called 'intelligence papers'. As a clear example, right after the July 27, 1996 Incident these two magazines shamelessly presented lies after lies about PRD and people who were supportive of the pro-democracy movement. ABRI has used these two magazines as a medium for its political propaganda and to attack individuals or groups who are against the government.

On Friday, October 24, 1997, when Xanana was building a toilet with other prisoners, the head of the prison asked him to meet with journalists from Gatra and Paron. This was a strange order. As far as I know, not a single publication is allowed to interview Xanana in prison. Xanana is isolated from the press so that his charisma and popularity will never appear before the Indonesian public. The fact that journalists from these magazines were able to obtain permission to do the interview aroused my suspicion: ABRI must be behind this, I thought. Xanana sensed the irregularity of the order too. These journalists must have been sent to find out more about Xanana's role in the case of the self-assembled bombs carried by activists of Brigada Negra. But he didn't seem a bit disturbed. With a warm smile, Xanana appeared in his prison uniform and shorts to meet his enemy's 'agents of propaganda.' The journalists seemed a bit surprised to see Xanana's relaxed appearance -- no trace of brutality or anger in his face, so unlike the demonic image ABRI consistently portrays of him. "I know that this interview has a sinister intention behind it. If they can come here to see me, it means that they are instruments of the military," Xanana told me. After greeting the journalists, Xanana patiently dealt with their questions. "They acted more like interrogators than journalists," he later said. The questions they asked were merely to confirm ABRI's scheme that Xanana was the mastermind of the bombing plan. At times, Xanana chose to remain silent, "Whenever I'm silent they think I agree with what they think. Let them believe whatever they want."

I asked Xanana why he was willing to be interviewed by journalists who would obviously use any means to slander him and to discredit the movement he leads. He replied, "This is only ABRI's game. Let them

be more confused," Xanana knows that ABRI was very angry at the Cipinang prison authority for being too lenient on him. The military got angrier when Xanana refused to be summoned for questioning the day before (October 23). Xanana is a person who has a rich imagination. He does not evade the tension created by the military, but he deals with it in his own style. He becomes an anomaly in the game manufactured by ABRI. His relaxed and indifferent attitude toward ABRI's propaganda and its attempts to corner him has confounded the military. They have not gotten what they want. "From here, these journalists will report to their supervisor, their supervisor will send the report to those generals. Let them be confused," Xanana said with a lingering smile. As a person who has faced such a bitter and endless struggle, Xanana is undoubtedly a tough leader. His composure remains intact, even when he has to face his number one enemy, the ABRI.

The visit of these 'intelligence journalists' to Cipinang prison to interview Xanana confirms further that Xanana is still a significant person in the problems of East Timor. No matter how hard the Indonesian government tries to deny his existence as a political prisoner, he remains a special prisoner with a political meaning. For Xanana himself, the Indonesian press has not achieved any standard of objectivity in other cases apart from East Timor. He even considers the Indonesian press to have suffered a worse fate than his own. He can say whatever he wants whether the government likes it or not. But the Indonesian press can not say whatever it wants, even if it is the truth. The intelligence press like Gatra and Paron demonstrate how the press tries to shape public opinion according to the military regime's view. Xanana is aware of the fact that Indonesian press actually discredits him and his movement more than it supports them. Yet, he also understands that the press coverage is not always determined by the journalists themselves, "I support freedom of the press in Indonesia. I'm against banning." This is a true democratic position, even toward the Indonesian press which has always discredited him. I wonder how the people in the press will respond to Xanana's statements.

A luta continua!

Cipinang Prison, November 1, 1997
12:23
WILSON

Coordinator of SPRIM (Indonesian Solidarity for the Struggle of the Maubere People)

COMMEMORATING NOVEMBER 12 FROM BEHIND BARS

Under a pouring rain, SPRIM and PRD held an open forum and vigil "Peace Candle" at University of Indonesia on November 12, 1995. One of the major demands of the vigil was 'Free Xanana Gusmao!' I never knew that my work in supporting the struggle of the Maubere people would lead to a meeting with the much admired leader of the Maubere struggle for independence. On this Wednesday of November 12, 1997, I approached Xanana Gusmao at the quiet visiting hall of Cipinang prison. He was accompanied by Joao and two guests. I shook his hand, "Bung Xanana, today is November 12, six years after the Santa Cruz massacre. We will always condemn that brutal massacre." Xanana warmly held my hand and translated what I said in Tetun to his guests whose hands I shook later on. This was the only thing I could do to commemorate the day.

This was actually the second November 12 I have commemorated inside prison. Commemorating a massacre does not only arouse compassion and sadness, but also a hatred toward the authoritarian regime that committed the crime. The November 12 Incident proves that the lives of young East Timorese martyrs and patriots have inspired wider resistance and prompted unbounded sympathy from the international community. It was the November 12, 1991 Incident too that opened my eyes to ABRI's despicable brutality in East Timor. If ABRI could use its bloody hands on its own people, it certainly would not hesitate to commit worse acts against the East Timorese fighters and the people who demand their independence.

As a student at a well-known university who had the legitimacy to guard the status quo of the New Order regime, I began to question one thing when reading the biased Indonesian press: "What actually happened in that faraway East Timor?" As a student of the History Department at the University of Indonesia, I had studied Indonesian history for seven years and had never seen a single fact which showed that East Timor was ever part of Indonesia. In the controversial textbook, Indonesian National History Vol. VI, there is no historical explanation of East Timor's existence as a province of Indonesia. We learned about East Timor as it existed in the 17th century. The Portuguese, failing to defend their mercantile penetration into the Moluccas against the Dutch, moved eastward to East Timor and remained there for four hundred years. It was a brief section of the history book, nothing comprehensive, as if it wanted to say that Portuguese Timor was never part of Indonesian history.

If history students, academicians and intellectuals do not know East Timor's past, I wondered where the Indonesian government derived its legitimacy to claim the area? Obviously, it was not from historians, but from the "stability politics" of the generals. One thing that can not be removed from the historical record of ABRI is the fact that ABRI has committed massacre after massacre in East Timor. I realized that historians have never been included in the project to legitimize East Timor's incorporation into Indonesia. If such a history were to be written, the ink would have to be of blood. The November 12 Incident was only one massacre among a whole chain of bloody events that have occurred since the invasion of December 7, 1975. If this authoritarian regime tries to conceal it, if historians are too afraid to write about it, it is the task of Indonesian democrats to compose a full account of the tragedy and to disseminate it to the people. PRD and SPRIM, with all our funds and forces, have tried to spread the news. We have never regretted what we have received in return, even this imprisonment. Actually, we have not done much for our Maubere comrades; we have merely dared to begin.

On Friday, November 14, 1997, I met Xanana at the basketball hall. On that very day, University of East Timor (Untim) students were involved in a clash with the military troops. Four of them were shot and about 16 were arrested. I found out about the incident from the radio when I tuned into the BBC's Indonesia Program around eight in the evening. I also learned that the Untim campus was closed on the twelfth and the students had held a vigil to commemorate the Santa Cruz tragedy on that day. November has always been a month of tension after the November 12, 1991 massacre. For the ABRI officials, November is a month of alert at they try to deal with the resistance of the East Timorese youth whose

militancy is `instinctively' increasing. Contrary to what the Indonesian government always tries to suggest, this militancy is not due to the propaganda sent out by the guerrillas. It is simply a response to the brutality which has been done and is still going on in that tiny island. November is a month of resistance, a month for seedlings to appear, a month for the young patriots who want to demonstrate the existence of their nation against an aggressor. Indeed, the seedlings of this month were sown not only by the East Timorese fighters, but also by ABRI itself.

On the night of November 12, 1997 when the guards started locking our cells in Block III-E, I looked at the sky from behind bars. The moon on the eastern horizon was almost full. I tried to compare the November 12 Incident with the July 27, 1996 Incident in Jakarta in which many people also lost their lives. Both came out of the same momentum: people's discontent against the military authority. However, I concluded that the consequences of the two events were diametrically opposed. The November 12 Incident was able to crystallize the hatred of the young people of East Timor into a militant and fearless movement. Meanwhile, the July 27 Incident has failed to increase the quality of mass resistance into a more militant movement. In my opinion, this is not necessarily because of the problems of organization and repression, but more of the failure of Megawati to make use of the positive sides of the incident to improve the quality of her struggle. Now, only a year later, it is obvious that the July 27 Incident has failed to create a momentum for improving the quality of the people's movement. Here, I begin to understand the importance of a strong figure in a political movement. The East Timorese people are lucky to have a charismatic leader like Xanana Gusmao. His leadership has bred a confidence among his people to continue their resistance, even under the most difficult conditions.

There will be three more November Twelfths that I will pass with Xanana Gusmao in this prison though there may be more for Xanana who is scheduled for release in 2012. Political prisoners from the pro-democracy movements are regularly coming and going in and out of this prison. It is very fortunate that Xanana is imprisoned in Cipinang, because in this way those democrats who are still hesitant or do not understand the hopes of the Maubere people hear more from the `spokesperson' of the Maubere people, the leader of their struggle. We respect Xanana Gusmao not as an individual, but as a moral inspiration for the values of struggle. On this November 12, through the bright eyes of Xanana Gusmao, through his wisdom clinging to his grayish, elegant beard, I can see a future with hope. I wish this hope also spreads to other democrats who are being alienated by the same enemy.

A luta continua!

LP Cipinang, November 26, 1997

WILSON

Coordinator of SPRIM (Indonesian Solidarity for the Struggle of the Maubere People)

COMMEMORATING 22 YEARS OF EAST TIMOR'S PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN CIPINANG PRISON, 28 NOVEMBER 1997

On November 28, 1975 Fretilin, as the elected government of East Timor, proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor at Dos Bos Ventura square in Dili. The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) had, by that time, already occupied the towns of Atabae and Fatularan. The people of East Timor never expected that the independence proclaimed by Fretilin would only last several days. Xavier Lopez da Cruz announced the integration of East Timor with Indonesia two days later with a document called the Balibo Declaration. This declaration was, in fact, drafted at the Bali Beach Hotel in Denpasar, Bali by a group of Indonesian military officials and representatives of several parties, including UDT, Apodeti and Kota. For over 22 years, Fretilin's proclamation has been commemorated annually inside the hearts of the East Timorese. Going by external appearances, the people have submitted to the Jakarta military regime. Nevertheless, the Indonesian military's control over them has failed to kill the spirit for independence lying inside their hearts. Freedom fighters can be exiled, imprisoned, or killed, but the hopes and dreams of a nation to determine its own fate continue to live from generation to generation. The dream remains like the blue sky that is always overhead even when clouds occasionally obscure it.

This year, the anniversary of the November 28 proclamation, coincided with the commemoration of the Islamic holiday of Isra Miraj. Early in the morning, around 7, I was ready to go to Xanana's cell to ask him to play basketball. Xanana and I organize basketball practice in Cipinang prison every Friday. When I was about to get out of my cell, a group of criminal prisoners who were supposed to join the practice approached me and told me that the hall for playing basketball was locked up. It turned out that since it was a national day for Isra Miraj, the official responsible for opening the hall did not come to work. Reluctantly, I canceled the practice for that day. This meant that I wouldn't be able to see Xanana and congratulate him on the 22nd anniversary of East Timor's proclamation of independence.

At 8:30am, I got dressed and ready to meet Pak Latief, a PKI political prisoner who has been in prison for the last 32 years. After talking with Pak Latief for half an hour, I left to see Joao and Fernando, two East Timorese prisoners who live in Block II-A, cell numbers 8 and 10. They were not in their cells. Joao was baking a cake in cell no. 9, the cell of Jacob, an OPM political prisoner, that also serves as the kitchen for Xanana and the other East Timorese political prisoners.

On the table I could see some cookies and a sponge cake freshly baked by Joao. He is a very good cook. Fernando, the Secretary General of Renetil, was busy peeling cassava that he had just uprooted from the garden behind his cell. He ordered another prisoner to catch one of his ducks and slaughter it. Observing this unusual business, I suspected that they were planning to do something special for the day. Before I was able to say anything, Joao said, "Today we are celebrating the proclamation and we would like to invite Wilson for lunch." No wonder they started cooking so early in the morning. I shook Joao and Fernando's hands to congratulate them for the celebration inside the New Order prison. Jokingly, I told Fernando to get the Fretilin flag, "Let's do a flag ceremony in front of this cell. Xanana can be the commander. PRD and OPM are ready to join the celebration."

At noon, Victor da Costa, a PRD political detainee, appeared at Fernando's cell. Victor is a victim of the Indonesian military's invasion of East Timor on December 7, 1975. He was an orphan adopted by an ABRI official from Cijantung, East Jakarta. His parents died after the invasion. I assume his parents were among the 200,000 people killed by the Indonesian army. I told him that there would be a special lunch to commemorate 22 years of the Democratic Republic of East Timor. At 1 pm, the meal prepared by Joao at cell no. 9 was ready to serve on the dining table. Joao opened the lunch by reminding us that today East Timorese political prisoners were celebrating the proclamation of their country's independence. "When we declared our independence, ABRI fighter planes and battleships were approaching Dili. We could hear them coming." Joao then said a prayer, while we joined the praying according to our own beliefs. I asked Fernando why Xanana did not show up. He said that prison officials were told to closely monitor Xanana so that he could not have any contacts with his followers, even the ones inside prison. This order came

down following the arrest of two activists from Brigada Negra in Dili last September. I could then only send my regards and congratulations via Joao.

This modest and simple celebration made me respect this small nation which knows no fear and never gives up fighting for its independence. I was reminded of the heroic proclamation of Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945 and the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution which states that it is the right of every nation to have independence. The present military regime has betrayed the 1945 Proclamation and the Constitution drafted by the founding fathers of the Indonesian nation. And, I believe the East Timorese people know this full well.

I remember Xanana's words when we celebrated the 'ceremony of concern toward independence' on August 17, 1997 in Cipinang prison: "The people of East Timor respect Indonesia's independence, that is why you should let us to go on the same path." I also remember what Poncke Princen said in his biography written by Joyce van Fenema, "I said I don't understand how come Indonesian people who had fought so hard to obtain the rights for self determination can deny the same rights for other people." Now, inside the prison that has separated us from the outside world, in a condition of non-independence, I can feel more how people would sacrifice their own independence, everything, for the nation's independence. I see Fernando and Joao like the Indonesian freedom fighters who were imprisoned by the Dutch colonial regime because of their political demand for a Free Indonesia. All this time, as a graduate of the History Department of the University of Indonesia, I only knew about the world, the feeling and the daily lives of the freedom fighters from their writings. But now, whenever I see Xanana Gusmao, Joao and Fernando, I come to imagine Soekarno, Hatta, Cipto, Marco, Amir Sjarifuddin, Sjahrir, in the colonial prisons decades ago. A slogan that is by now clichéd, one I have tended not to believe in, seems to fit this time, "History repeats itself."

Today's small celebration of five people is done. We finished off the duck curry, the boiled cassava, and the sponge cake. The people of East Timor are still fighting to take back their independence robbed by the Soeharto regime. Indonesian democrats appear to be more open in showing their sympathy for the East Timorese struggle. Cipinang prison witnesses the development of this history. I sincerely hope that before his date of release in 2012 Xanana will be able to celebrate East Timor's independence among his own people, not in prison by himself like today. It is only a matter of time.

A luta continua!
Cipinang Prison, November 28, 1997

WILSON
Coordinator of SPRIM (Indonesian Solidarity for the Struggle of the Maubere People)